



Public Comments Invited for Environmental Assessment

Pinnacles National Monument announces the opening of the public scoping period for the park’s Bottomlands Restoration Environmental Assessment – March 20 to April 21, 2008

Purpose The nearly 2,000 acres of land recently acquired at Pinnacles National Monument include rare valley oak savannahs and pockets of wetlands, which transition into hillsides of native buckwheat and chaparral. This addition to the park also includes over 200-acres of an aggressive weed, the non-native yellow star-thistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*), which threatens to spread throughout the Monument and onto adjacent lands.

Studies show that prescribed fire is an effective control technique when used on yellow star-thistle for at least three consecutive years; the Monument proposes to use this treatment on the yellow star-thistle infestation on the new bottomlands at Pinnacles.

This Environmental Assessment would update the 2005 Pinnacles Fire Management Plan (FMP) to include these newly acquired lands in order to treat yellow star-thistle and to update the parkwide FMP to reflect recent scientific studies on managing chaparral.

Preliminary Project Objectives The preliminary project objectives are:

- Prevent yellow star-thistle spreading further into the Monument and adjacent private lands ,
- Eradicate existing yellow star-thistle infestations ,
- Amend the FMP to include lands acquired since the plan was completed,
- Identify the combination of invasive plant control and native plant revegetation techniques that would be most effective for the Bottomlands,
- Establish native plants in the Bottomlands to provide a local seed source for other areas of the Monument, and
- Protect and enhance the habitat of native plant species important to local Native Americans through the use of prescribed burning.

Alternatives Alternatives that may be included in the Environmental Assessment are:

- a “no project” alternative modifying the FMP to include the new lands, without changing the current FMP strategy, and without a weed control project for new lands except to control its futher spread within the Monument.
- a star-thistle removal/pasture restoration project alternative that would also update the FMP to include new lands, managed under the current FMP strategy.
- a star-thistle removal/pasture restoration project alternative that would update the FMP to include new lands and modify the FMP strategy from the current requirement for prescribed burning in chaparral to a management program that would allow, but not require, prescribed burning in the chaparral, if shown by research to have important resource benefits.

The Importance of Your Comments Public comments will be used to determine the range of issues and alternatives to be addressed in the environmental assessment. Your written comments with your name and address will be a part of the administrative record for the project but will not be published in the EA.

Issues that may be addressed include: the effects of aggressive weed species on native habitat; potential for native plant restoration in former pasturelands; effects of actions on the California red-legged frog and California condor; impacts of wildfire suppression and fuel reduction projects; effects of prescribed burning on chaparral, grasslands, weed infestations, or air quality; effects of herbicide application on thistle plants; potential erosion, sedimentation and effects on water quality; effects on recreation and visitor and staff safety.

We anticipate that an EA will be the appropriate type of document to assess the effects of this planning process; otherwise an Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared.

How You Can Provide Input

Bottomlands Public Meeting

Wednesday, April 2, 2008
6:00-7:30 pm

Jefferson School
221 Old Hernandez Road
Paicines, CA 95043

Park staff will present an overview of proposed restoration actions for the Bottomlands. A discussion will follow regarding any questions, suggestions or concerns.

To submit scoping comments -OR- to request a copy of the draft document when it is released, contact the park in writing:

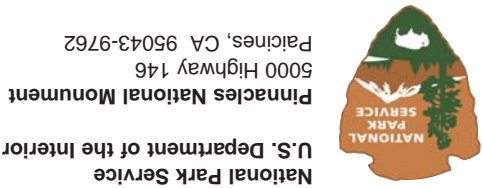
Email PINN_Superintendent@nps.gov

Fax (831) 389-4489

Mail Superintendent
Pinnacles National Monument
Attn: Bottomlands Restoration EA
5000 Highway 146
Paicines, CA 95043

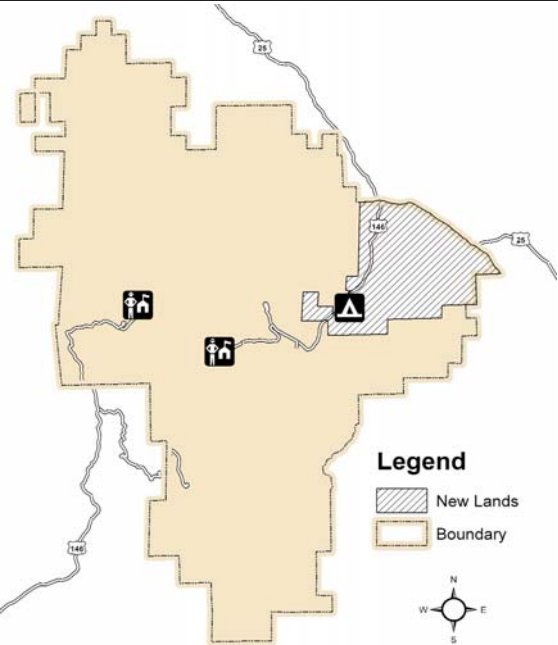
All written comments must be postmarked by April 21, 2008.

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA



Bottomlands Environmental Assessment

Pinnacles National Monument



New lands recently acquired at Pinnacles National Monument are infested with yellow star-thistle, an aggressive non-native weed. Yellow star-thistle has already invaded many other areas surrounding the park.

Public comments are requested on the Monument's proposed plans to restore the new lands and prevent the further spread of yellow star-thistle.